The Book of GAMES

Seth K. Deitch

The Gaming Cube. Assemblage with hand engraved acrylic cube, leather and Tungsten container. 2017 Collection of Kimberly Rodgers

The Book of Games is copyright 2021 by Seth K. Deitch. Resemblance of any depictions in this book to any persons living or dead would be strange to say the very least. Mr Deitch may be contacted at 71 Spring Street, Watertown, MA 02472 or at skdeitch@yahoo.com.
This book documents an eccentric art project and is not intended to threaten you in any way. If that sort of thing worries you, I would recommend you read something else, maybe something about food or puppies. Thank you.

Greetings

It may surprise you to learn that I am not super into games. I like the occasional game of Chess, Monopoly, Poker or what-have-you, but I have never bothered to build superior skills in any game really, but I do have a fascination with the place that games occupy in human consciousness. Games don't actually have any power over me. I have a friend who truly loves games who has made quite an impact on my life, but I just don't feel it in the way she does. It's not that I'm noncompetitive, but I don't get emotional about symbolic competition. If challenged in a real life situation I compete fiercely and am not a good loser. Over a gaming t able I win or lose graciously. My "It's only a game" attitude used to really piss of my gym t eachers.

Anyway, all of that does not mean that the symbolism and ritual of game playing doesn't fascinate me. I have always loved the strange maps of game boards and the arcane symbology of dice and other gaming pieces. I like anything that invites the hand to toy with it. I like the element of chance and I like the element of skill and I like both of those things in cooperation bemusing the human mind. Even so, I view it as an outsider. It's all very cryptic. It was very natural for me to want to devise cards, dice and boards that had no obvious meaning, to present an important element of human culture in a way that an outer space alien visitor might perceive it. My lifelong interest in asemic writing provided part of the key. What if the dice we role had no obvious value, if one face seems to have as little meaning as another? If no numeric or linguistic value was evident? Yes, the same could be said if this outsider were presented with one of our novels or TV shows, but the game requires a higher level of interaction. If that interaction is turned back upon itself like the event horizon of a black hole, the entire paradigm is subverted.

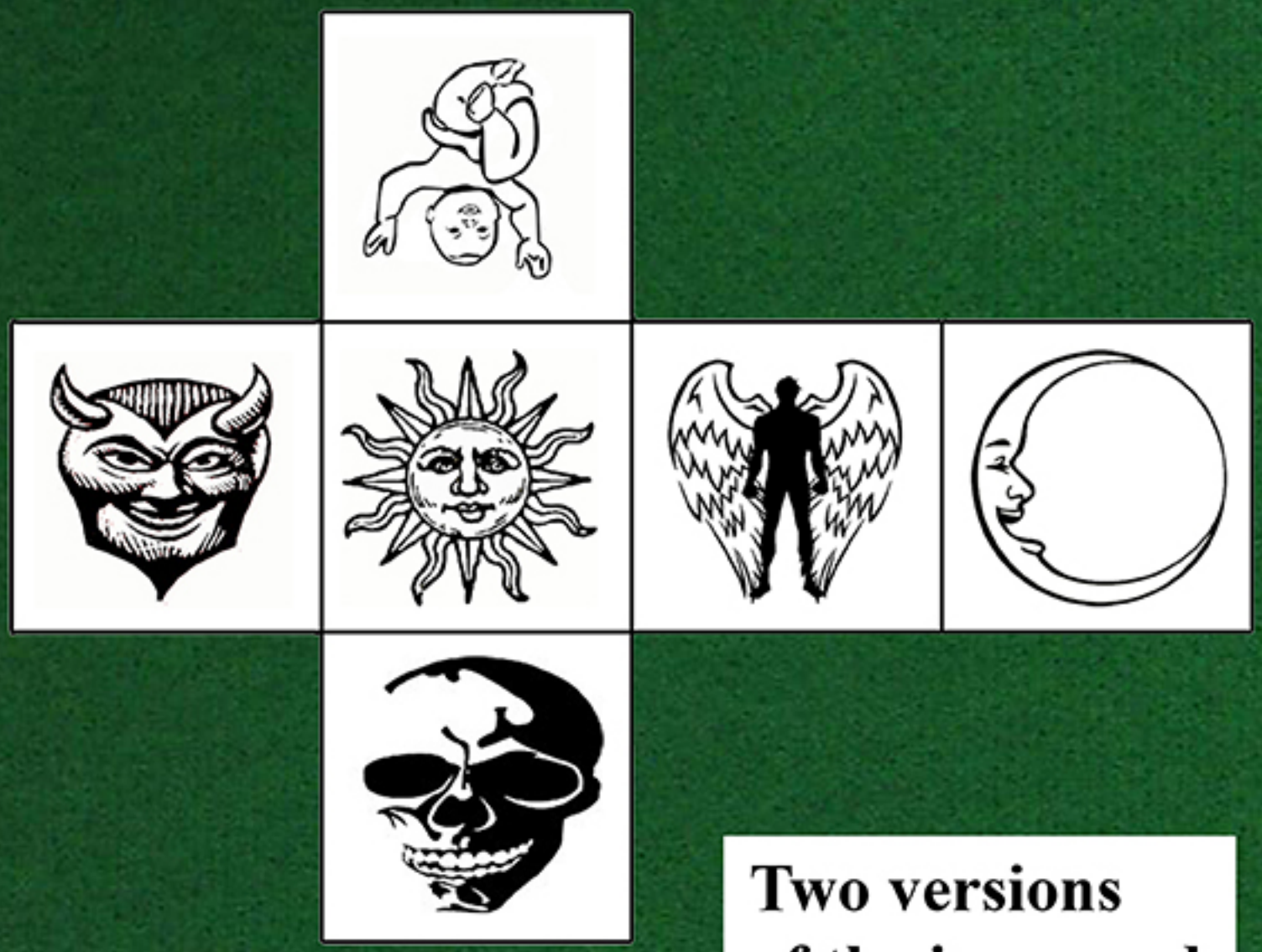
So why this act of intellectual terrorism? I don't know that I have a succinct answer. The meaning of meaning has always been a big thing in my internal wiring. The great frustration of my childhood was discovering that not everything could be explained. I was a science kid who firmly, dogmatically believed that the universe was knowable. To learn different was as if a dedicated Christian discovered that Jesus was created by Walt Disney in 1947. . I still believe that the universe is knowable, but I have also learned to be comfortable with the idea that it is also deeply mysterious and that there two things are not contradictory. There is more than one way of knowing the world and infinite ways to be baffled by it.

This book is a document of a journey that leads nowhere in particular. It is the road trip, not the destination.

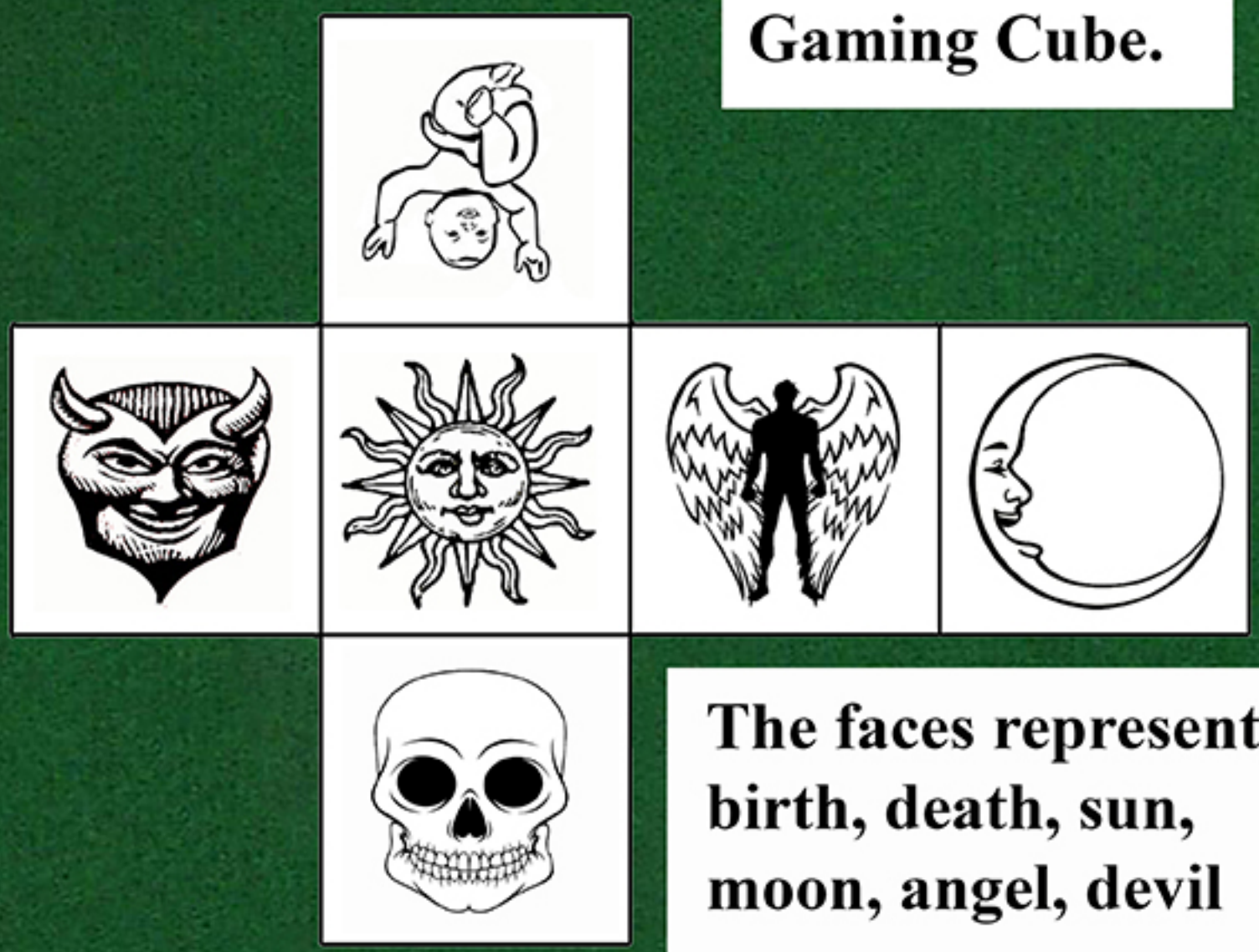
-Seth Deitch 11/7/2021

THE GAMING CUBE II
THE CONTAINER IS 4" HIGH. UPON LIFTING IT ONE COULD BE FORGIVEN FOR BELIEVING THAT IT WAS A CYLINDER OF SOLID STEEL. UNSCREW THE TWO HALVES AND IT IS REVEALED TO HAVE WALLS ONLY 1/8" THICK. IT IS MADE FROM TUNGSTEN AND HAS A SIMILAR SPECIFIC GRAVITY TO GOLD.
INSIDE IS THE 1" BAKELITE GAMING CUBE INSCRIBED ON SIDES WITH SYMBOLS FOR GOOD, EVIL, BIRTH, DEATH, SUN AND MOON.
THIS IS THE SECOND VERSION OF THIS OBJECT. THE FIRST IS IN THE COLLECTION OF KIMBERLY ROGERS. IN THE FIRST VERSION THE CUBE IS INSCRIBED WITH PRIMITIVE, MYSTERIOUS GLYPHS.

The laser cutter entered the equation in 2018 thanks to my discovery of the WFPL HATCH Makerspace in 2018.



Two versions of the improved Gaming Cube.

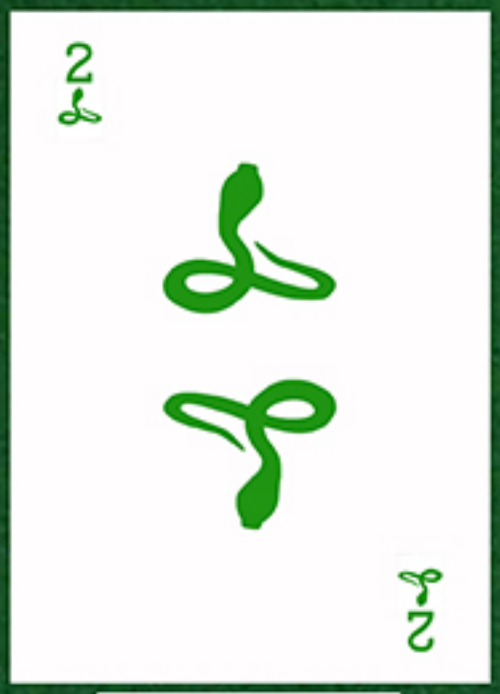


The faces represent birth, death, sun, moon, angel, devil

XENOLITE
XENOLITE

The Xenolite Mystery Deck is a set of pseudo playing cards created in early 2018 limited to an edition of 20 complete sets of 52 cards each. Each individual card is the single representative of its suit. The suits include acorns, revolvers, clovers, swastikas, clouds, keys, fleurs de lis, interobangs and so forth. I was honestly surprised when many of my friends were quite convinced that they could devise a game for this deck! Up until now, I have yet to see one.

Zero of Clubs



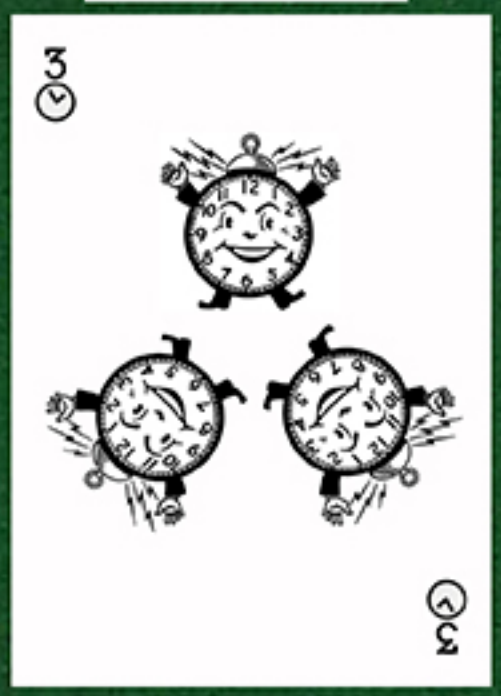
Deuce of Serpents

Deuce of Triskelions

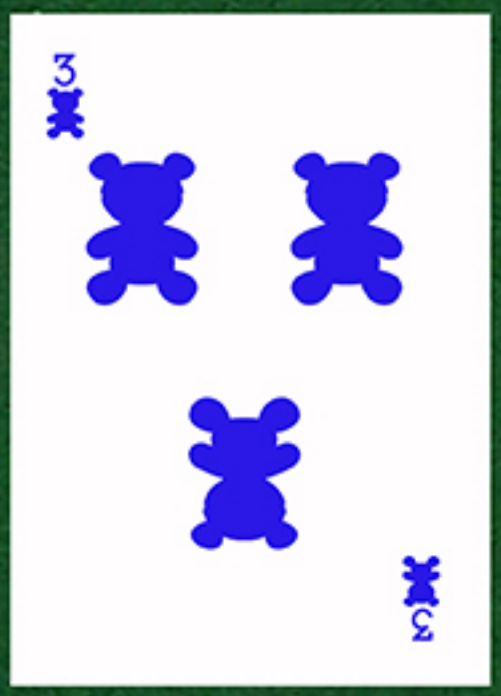
Deuce of Keystones

Three of Interobangs

Three of Guitars



Three of Clocks



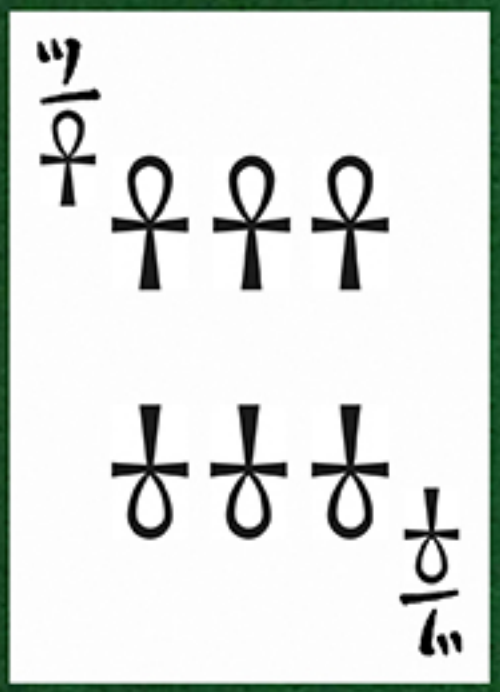
Three of Teddies

Four of Ampersands

Four of Fish

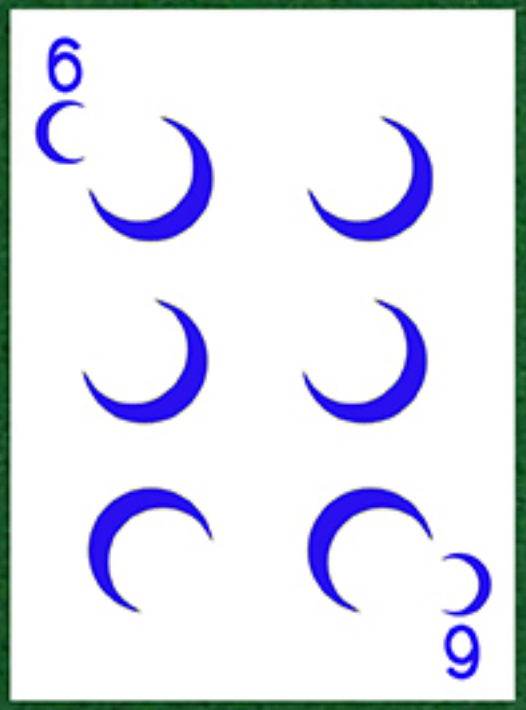
Five of Fleures de lis

Five of Broken Hearts

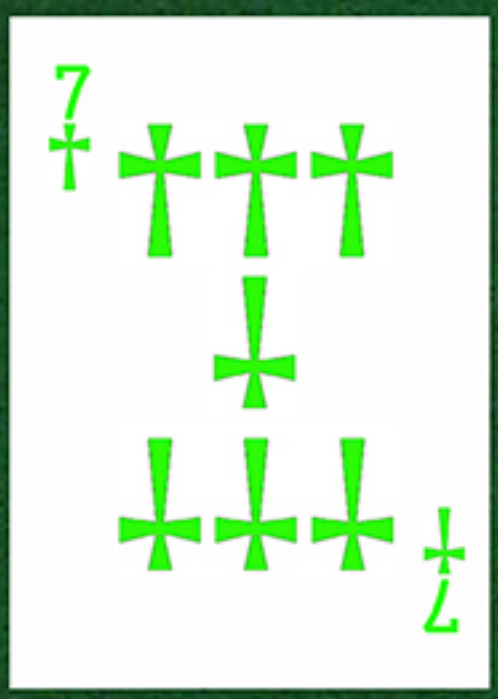


Six of Ankhs

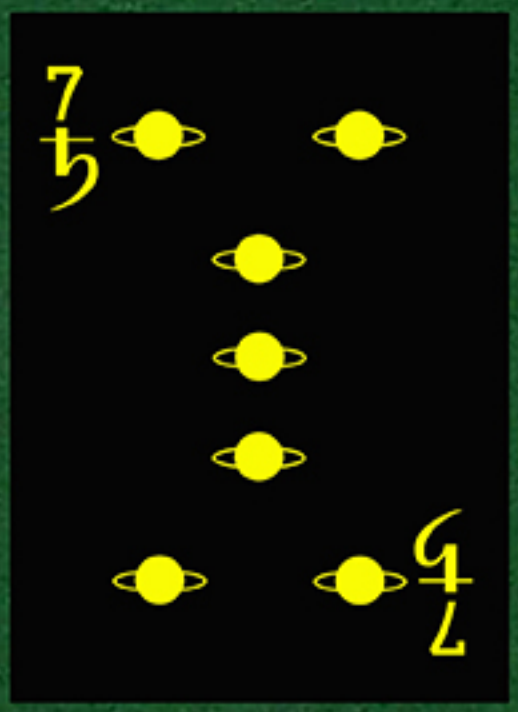
Six of Hares



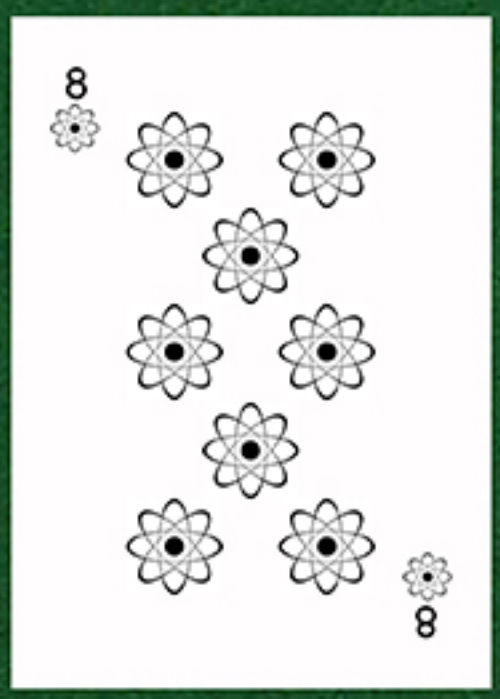
Six of Crescents



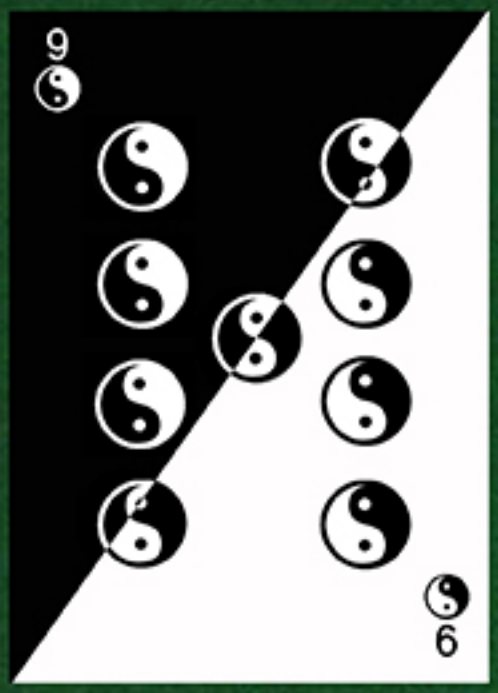
Seven of Cruxes



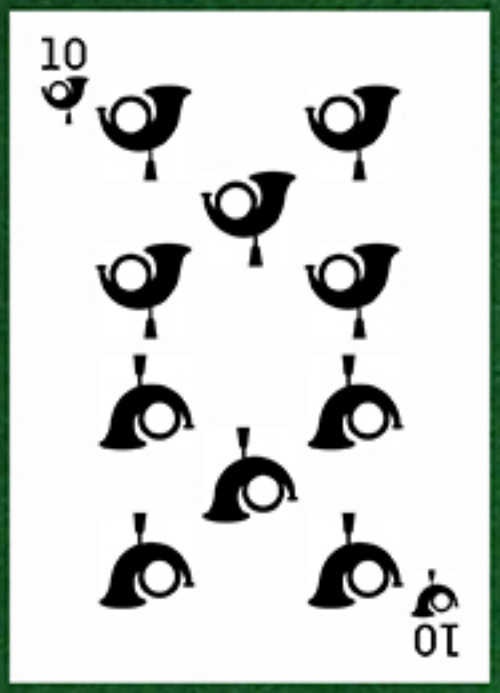
Seven of Saturn



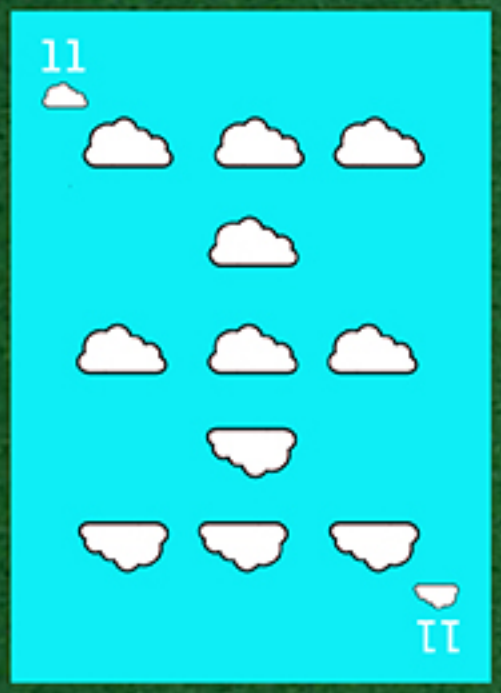
Eight of Atoms



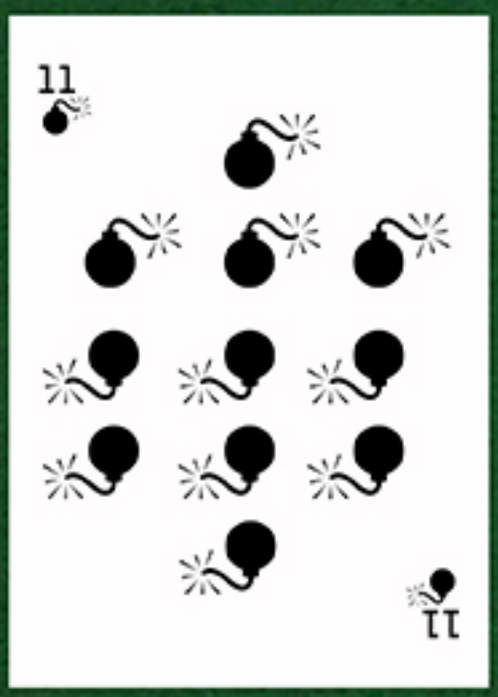
Nine of Yin/Yang



Ten of Bugles

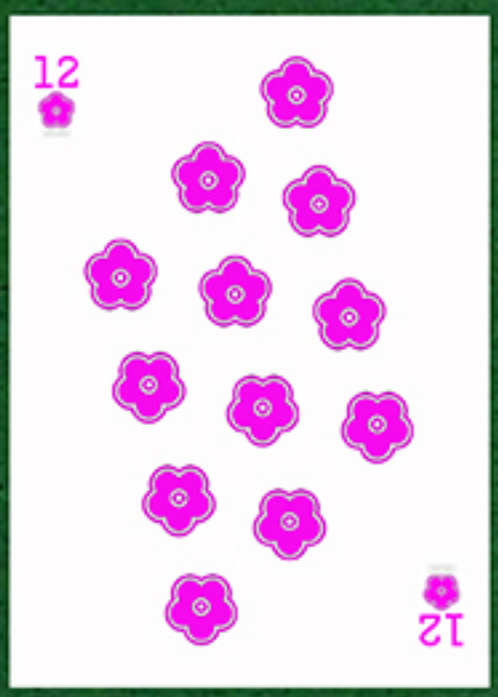


Eleven of Clouds

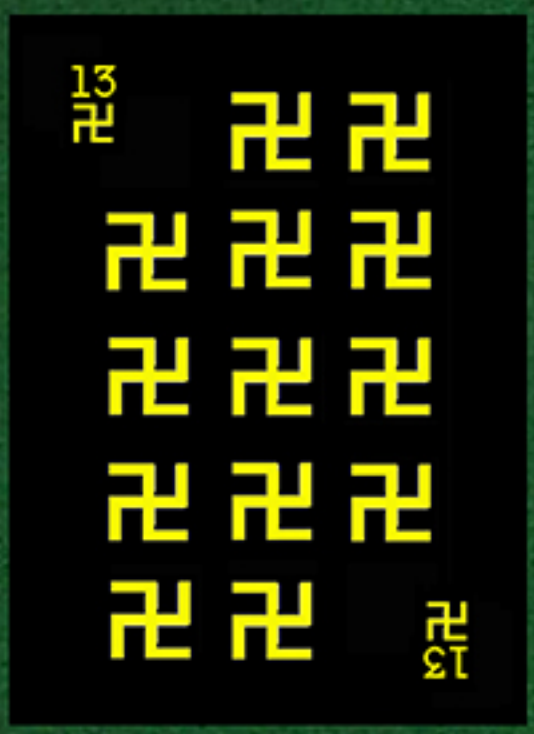


Eleven of Bombs

Twelve of Scotties



Twelve of Posies

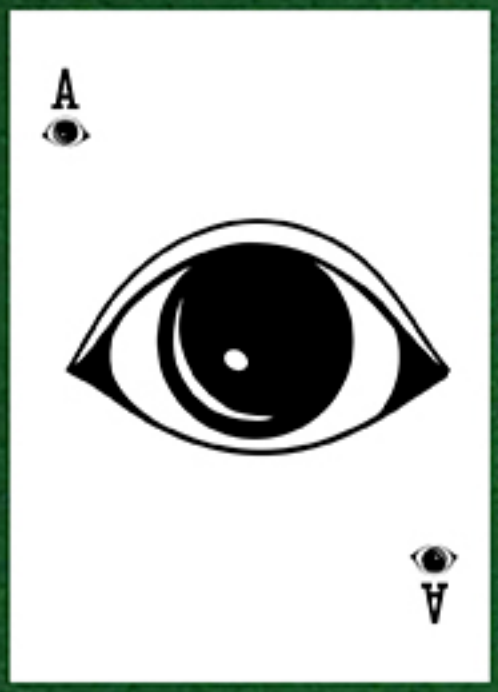


Thirteen of Swastikas

Fifteen of Butterflies

Sixteen of Revolvers

Ace of Airships



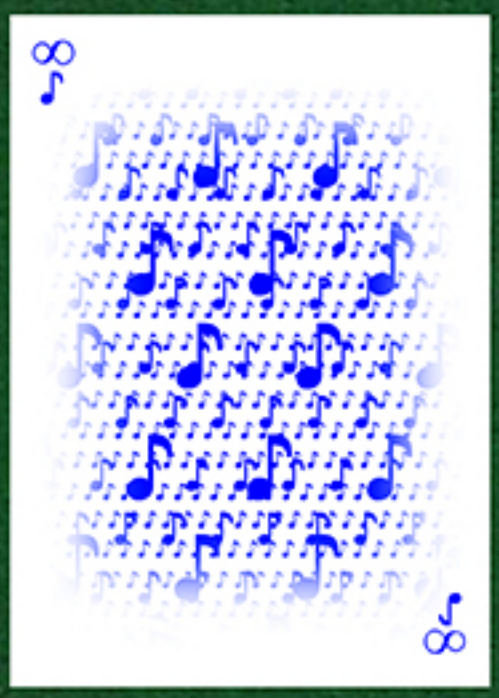
Ace of Eyes

Ace of Seeds

Ace of Skulls

King of Ducks

Ace of Time

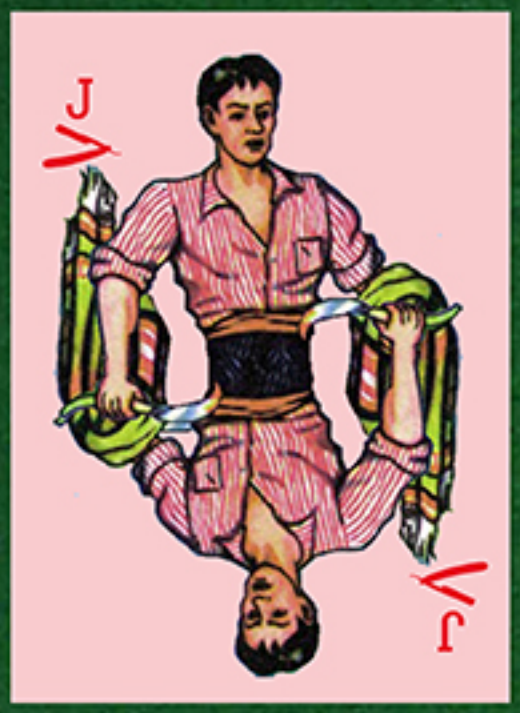


Infinity of Quavers

Queen of Clovers

Queen of Rhombuses

Google of Stars



Jack of Razors

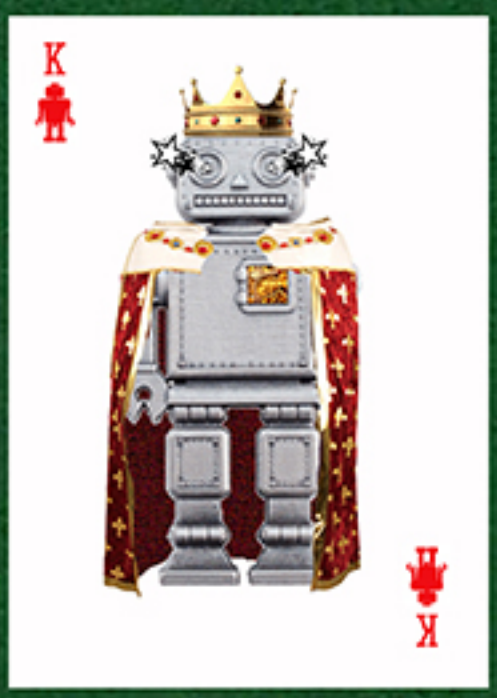
Jack of Daggers

Jack of Dragons

Jack of Hammers

Joker

Joker



King of Robots

King of Keys

King of Tridents

Monkey of Acorns

Pi of Spades

Queen of Hearts

Queen of Spiders

Queen of Swords

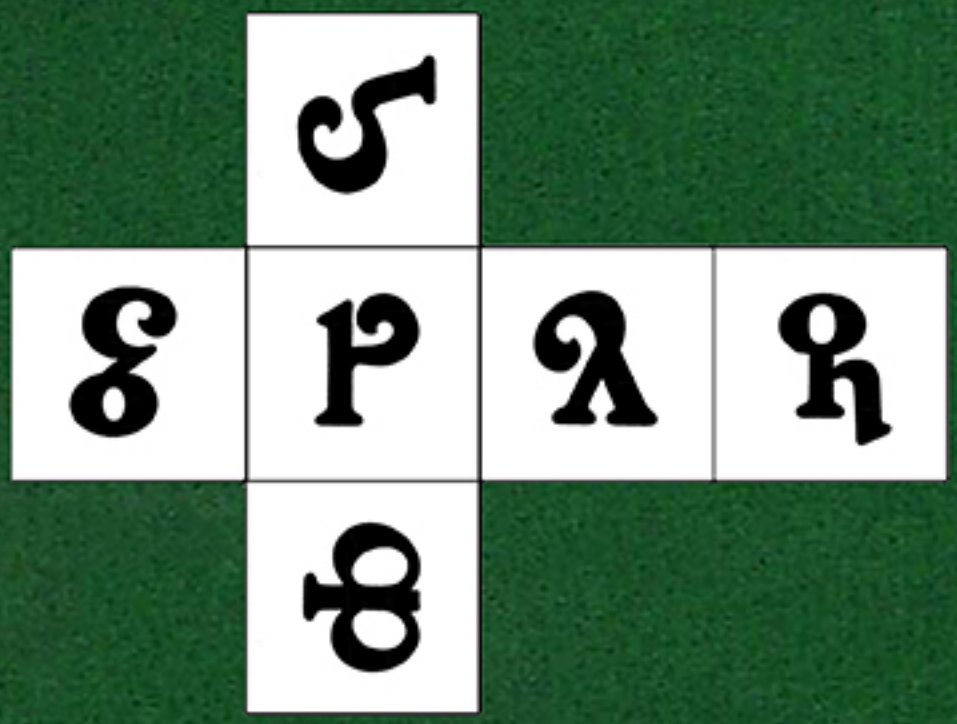
Queen of Petals

Card Back

Inscription Card

The Mystery Glyph Dice were one of the very first things I did on the laser cutter. It turns out that the acrylic material of off the shelf unpipped dice are perfect for it. Seen here is the very first set I made.

This is the map I made for positioning the asemic symbols. The font comes from a piece I did for my ‘zine Get Stupid way back in the 1980s.



Classical Elements Molecular Model Set

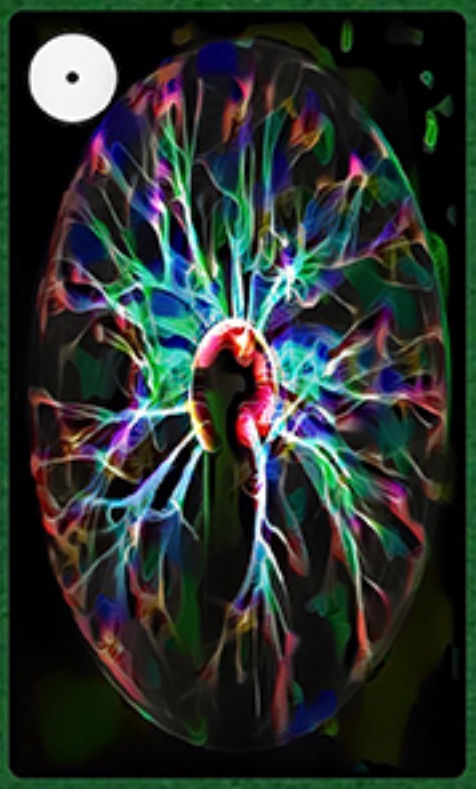
The Classical Elements Molecular Model set was even for me a pretty esoteric notion.

The idea was the cards could be used to illustrate how various combinations and proportions of the four elements with a little help from Aether and Void could be used to construct everything in the world. Perhaps it is fun for alchemists and *only* alchemists. Interest in this piece was limited to say the least.

These cards were later incorporated into the Mingo game object

Earth

Fire



Aether

Water

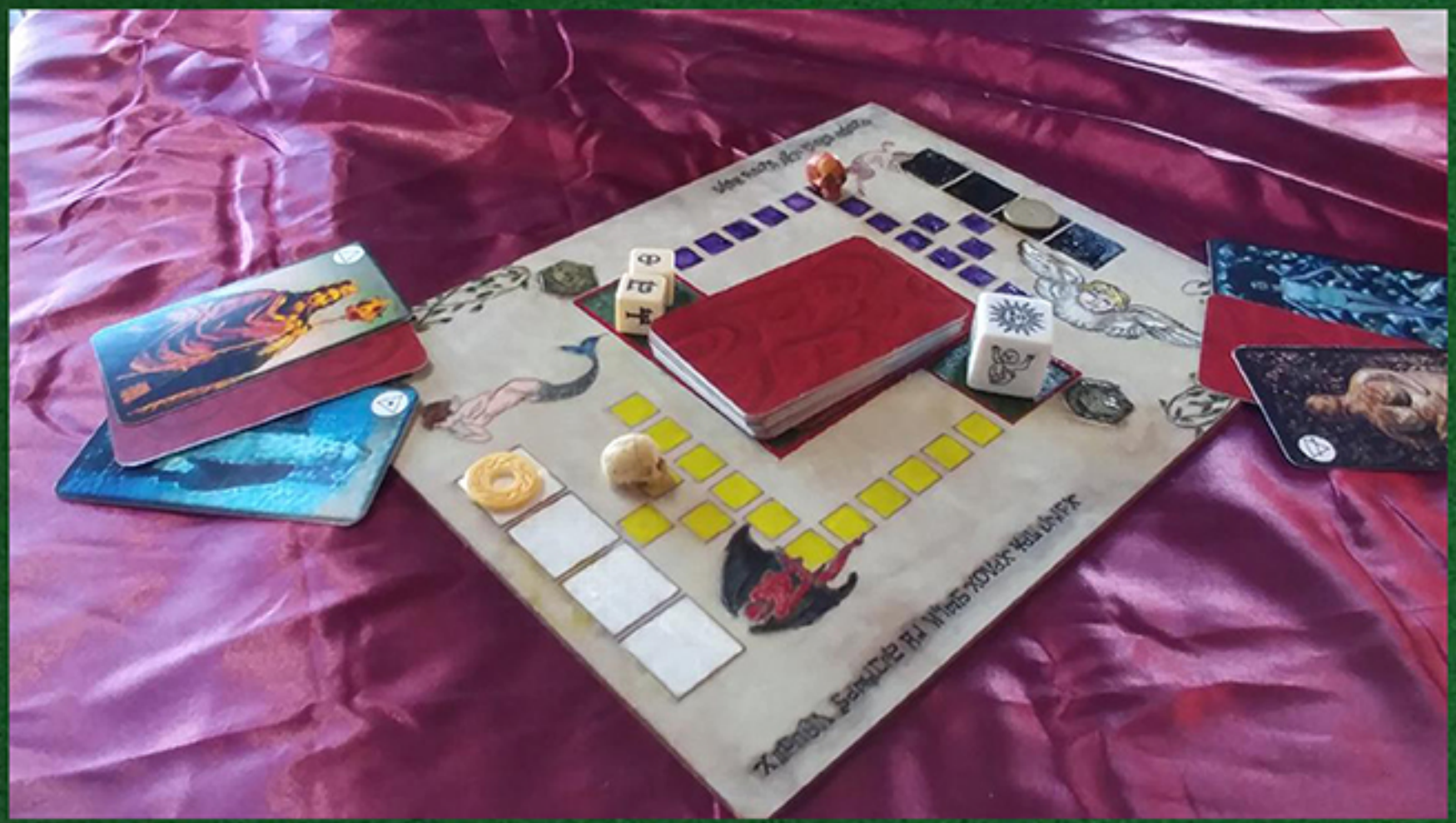
Air

Void

X
3

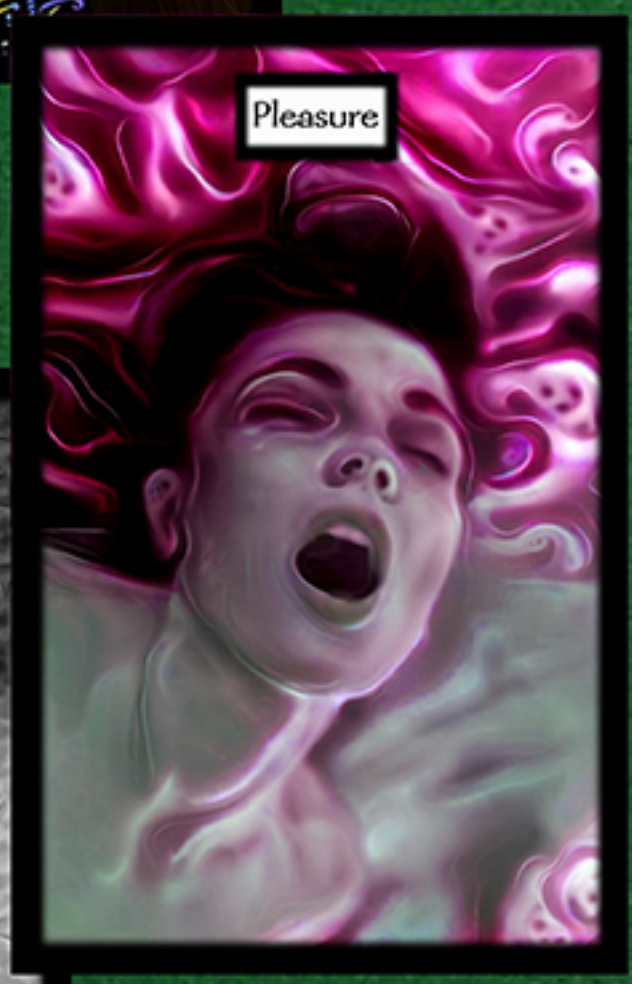
MINGO

The game of Mingo was an attempt to create an impenetrable mystery that has the appearence of a perfectly playable game. I have had at least two swear to me thay could make up rules for gameplay. So far neither have come through. One of them I even supplied with a set of cards, dice and a file for printing the board.

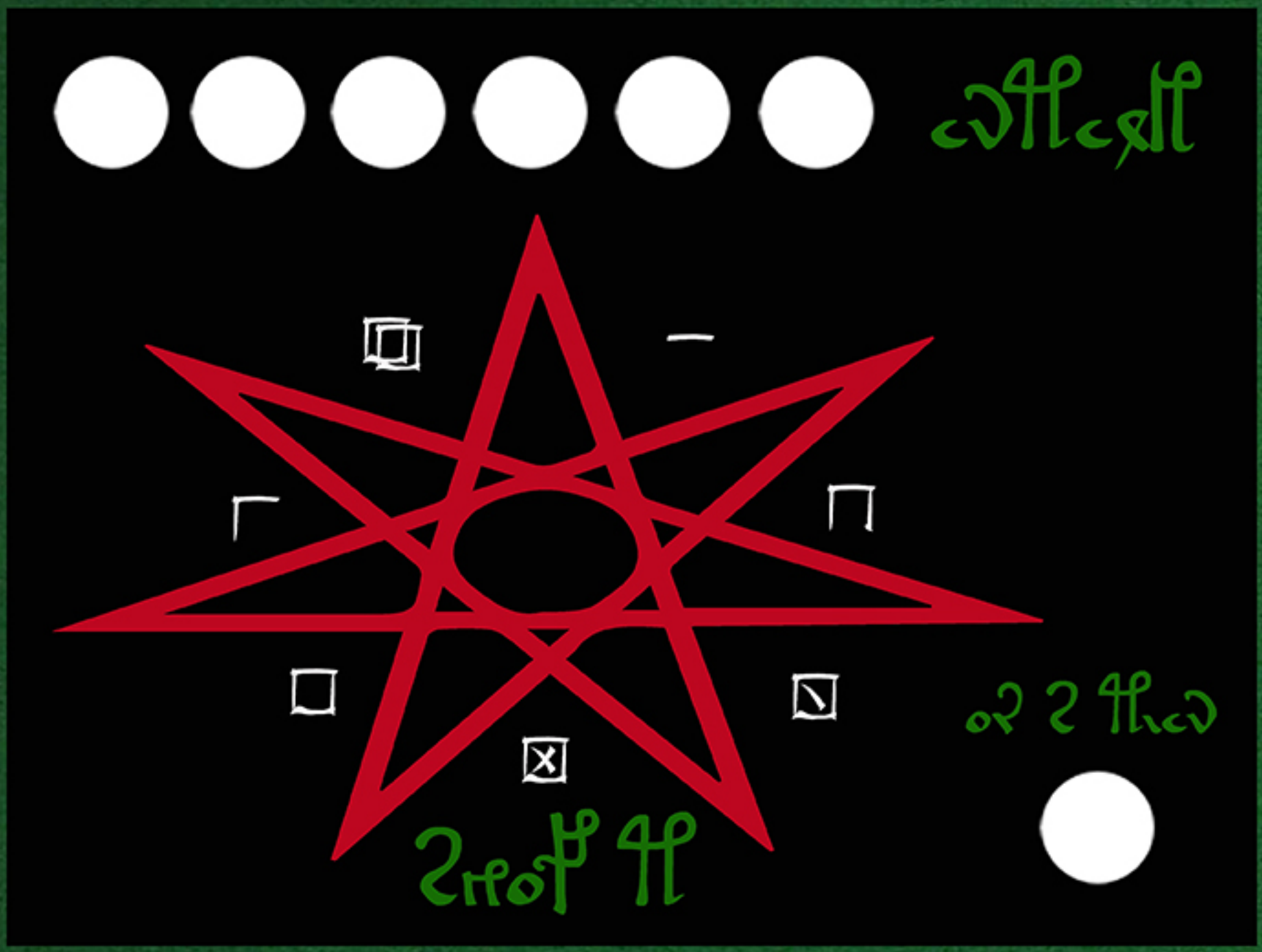


As well as the Element cards, Mingo uses Gylph dice with two different fonts, one of them is the original Mystery Glyph die and as well a second die using my Grimoire font and a large version of the improved symbol Gaming cube. For gameboard markers each player gets to use a random token of their choice plus a small plaster skull.

I devoted a whole other book to **The Symbol Keys**, an actually playable, although non-competitive game aimed at reconstructing the mental process of dreaming, but it does belong to the gaming series so it at least deserves some mention here. . It has 100 cards plus blanks for the players to create their own. The images are intended to be triggers for the imagination. I have yet to get around to actually printing a set of these cards

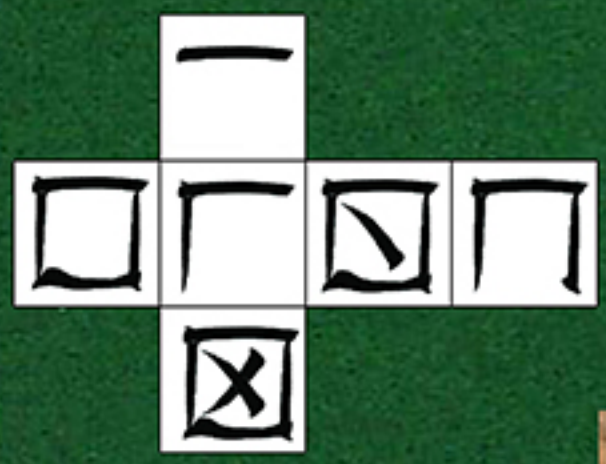


The Star Game



The Star Game was a complex build. Making the board, dice and playing pieces were all seperate challenges. The board is painted wood with greeb felt backing. The pieces were mosaic tiles that I inscribed with the laser cutter and also backed with felt. I had a few false starts learning to cut the tiles.

The unifying graphic element here was that the board, dice and pieces used the alphabet from the mysterious Voynich Manuscript. Look it up if you have never heard of it.



As well as the Voynich alphabet die, there is a Tally cube that uses a six point system as opposed to the usual five.. There are corresponding marks on the board linked to the tally cube.

As usual, some have come forward to claim they could make rules for this game with the usual results.

Materials Tests

Basalt cubes cut with characters
in the “Lost Empire” font.

Throughout this process there were a plethora of ideas that didn’t work out. I spent weeks trying to make dice from various sorts of stone. I attempted dice in the asemic Lost Empire font on both Basalt and Granite with unsatisfactory results. Particularly in the case of Granite, it wouldn’t cut deeply or cleanly enough and wouldn’t take ink or paint well . Basalt was only slightly better, but had to be cut many times to get half decent results and even then not up to the standard I desired.

The best of this series was a single Basalt cube cut with Enochian characters at high power and very low speed and it heated up so much during the process that I was worried it would crack or even explode and damage the equipment.

Two views of a granite cube
cut in the “Lost Empire” font.

The Basalt Enochian cube.
now in the collection
of
Panik Bedlam

The “ANTIMATTER” game

Antimatter had several false starts. I was going to use tile again for the movable pieces but they just seemed unsatisfactory. I wanted something with a slicker look. I finally settled on some Melamite Go stones. They cut well and took ink well. I used China white for the black ones.

The symbols on the board and the white diewere taken from Thomas More's Utopian alphabet. The black die reproduced the symbols on the movable pieces.

Ultimately, I didn't like it as much as the Star Game. It just didn't have as neat a look in my opinion. I decided to hang it up before I even made a final version of the board. I wanted to start on something with a more commercial look that would have a printed folding board and come in a printed box, but I changed my mind before I even got started on designs for it.

Onward

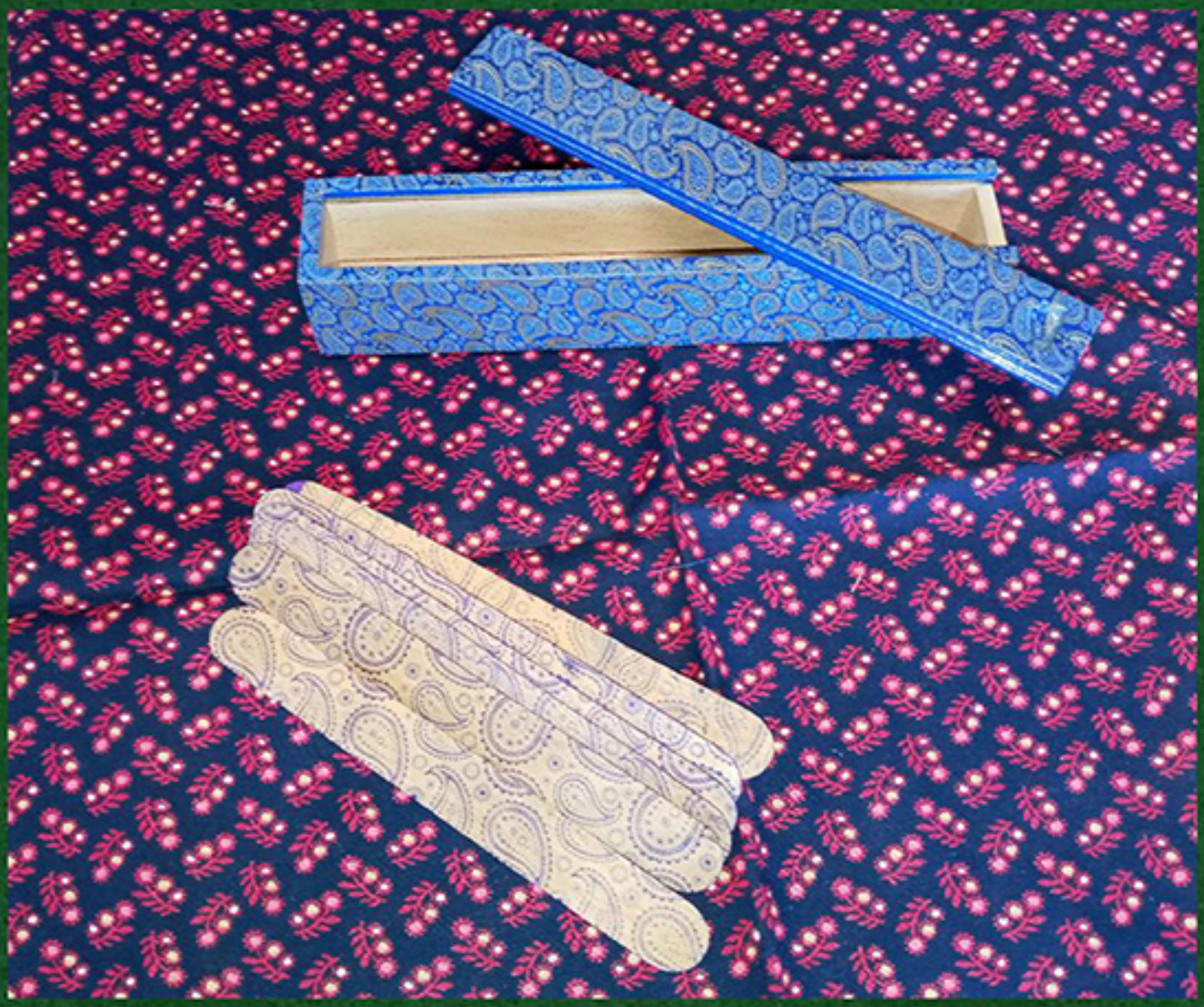
“PAZEL”

The paisley puzzle

This was a short project with good results. That rare occasion when I am 100% satisfied with the outcome. I’m careful to not get used to it.

I came across this beautiful blue laquered slide top box that once contained a single very expensive cigar. I put it in the laser cutter and inscribed a paisley pattern all over the surface. It was pretty, but what was I going to do with it?

The finished box sat around for a little while until I found a pile of purple craft sticks. Usually the biginning, middle and end of my relationship with craft sticks is mixing epoxy with one and throwing it away, but for some reason I started cutting patterns on them and I set up six of them side by side and inscribed a paisley pattern on them and then turned them all over and did it on the back . I realized that I now had a puzzle to reassemble the paisley pattern!



The sticks fit neatly in the box as if it had been made for them!

The puzzle is more difficult than you might think. It is solvable with both sides of the sticks, but the sides are easily mixed up and the solution is a repeating pattern. A number of people have thrown their hands up in frustration.

If I had a steady supply of these wonderful boxes, I would make a hundred of these and sell them at craft fares for ten bucks each, but these little beauties are hard to come by unfortunately.

D12

I decided to try my hand at inscribing a D12 die using the Lost Empire font. Keeping straight what went where on it was going to be a bit of a challenge. I made a large paper model of the die that would sit next to the laser cutter while I worked that I could turn as I went along to show what glyph I was supposed to be carving on which face. I really have a tendency to blow my own mind while doing stuff like this, so it really helped to have a visual aid!

There were some unforseen technical issues. Not all blank dice are made of the same quality acrylic and the available choices for this sort of thing are limited. The blanks I ended up with were of inferior quality that neither cut nor took ink well. I just didn't like the finished look.

You may notice that I ended up changing the layout of the glyphs between the model and the finished product. I just decided that it worked a little better aesthetically.

The Divination Set

This one took a few tries to get right. I wanted to create something that a fantasy fortune teller might use. I created two new asemic fonts, both of which had an archaic look to them for use on either side of the tiles. I obtained blank Scrabble tiles, but they proved to cut poorly. My second choice was opaque white plexiglass squares. They worked ok, but I didn't like their shiny finished look.

Finally I settled on some blank, white poker chips that were at the maker space. I spray painted them black and gave them a thick coating of glaze and cut the figures using a very high speed setting that would normally be used for cutting paper to just go through the paint and reveal the white underneath.

It worked like a charm! another coat of glaze and they had the properly finished look and weren't too shiny like the square tiles had been.

I added a couple of dice to the set, a 25 millimeter cut with Lost Empire glyphs and a sixteem millimeter die cut with glyphs from the Grimoire font.

Ultimately, they were placed in a decorative woodedn box.

More Dice

Voynich

Utopian

Lost Empire

Enochian

Chonko (asemic)

Astro Nits

Roman

Sugar Skulls

Binary

Ангел хранитель. Витраж